RENOVA LIBRIS

LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney, GENEVA

background information

FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY

LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney, GENEVA

December, 1965 No. 34

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MARXISTS AND CHRISTIANS

		Page
I.	As Marxists, we are Struggling on Behalf of Man by Roger Garaudy	5
II.	A Dawn Breaking Which Will Make the Dimensions of God's Love More Visible by Jean-Yves Jelif	10
III.	The Christian Church and Communist Atheism by Helmut Gollwitzer	15
IV.	The Struggles of the Working Class and the Search of a New Social Order by Mario Miegge	22
V.	Some Aspects of the Dialogue Between Christians and Marxists (1964-65) by Mauricio Lopez	32

Background Information is published two or three times a year to promote ecumenical discussion on social issues and is distributed by request. It is compiled by the staff of the Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches, but does not necessarily represent the views of the World Council, its departments or its staff. Background Information may be quoted only with direct permission.

DEPARTMENT ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY
Division of Studies - World Council of Churches
17 route de Malagnou - Geneva - Switzerland

I M P O R T A N T

N O T I C E

Dear Reader,

In 1966 Background Information will supply additional material on the forthcoming World Conference on Church and Society (12th-26th July, 1966) in Geneva. For 1966 six issues are planned.

This poses a financial problem. Up to the moment payments for Background Information have been voluntary but for this year we are unfortunately unable to continue with this scheme. We, therefore, kindly ask you to fill the attached order blank and to send it back to Geneva together with a cheque or international money order for $3.—, 15/0d. or SFrs/DM 9,— (subscription for six numbers 1966). We kindly ask for your understanding.

World Council of Churches
Department on Church and Society

Geneva, December 1965

World Council of Churches,
Publications Office,
150, route de Ferney,
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

I want to subscribe to Background Information for 1966 (six issues) and enclose cheque/send money order for

$3.— 15/0d. SFrs/DM 9,—

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

....
Date Signature

The two articles reproduced here were published in the Parisian weekly "Témoignage chrétien" (Number 1080, March 18, 1965), as a follow-up of a discussion between Christians and Marxists which took place at the Seventeenth Session of Roman Catholic Intellectuals in Paris in March 1965.

M. Roger Garaudy is a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party. Father Jean-Yves Jolif, o. p., is professor of philosophy at the Catholic University in Lyon, France. We are grateful to the editor of "Témoignage chrétien", M. Georges Montaron, to permit us to reproduce these articles in English. "Témoignage chrétien" is responsible for the titles as well as the explanatory notes.

Professor Gollwitzer's paper on The Christian Church and Communist Atheism has been already published in Le Semeur in 1961; it is encluded in this number for its relevancy to the ongoing discussion on the nature of Marxism.

Mario Miegge's contribution is attempting to show the critical and revolutionary elements of Marxism and what he thinks to be the meeting place for a true and permanent dialogue between Marxism and Christianity.

Mauricio Lopez gives a short account of the more recent aspects of the dialogue that has taken place in Europe these two last years.

I

AS MARXISTS, WE ARE STRUGGLING ON BEHALF OF MAN

by

Roger Garaudy

One of the essential characteristics of Marxist atheism is its integration of all that which successive cultures and civilizations have contributed to man. Christianity constitutes a sizeable portion of this heritage. Marx, in The Jewish Question, stressed that only an authentic democracy could "make real in a secular way" the "human basis (1) of Christianity" (der menschliche Grund des Christentums).

What, then, is this "human basis" which Marxist atheism strives to integrate? In asking this question and in attempting to bring to it the beginnings of an answer, I do not in any way claim to take the place of the theologians nor to give an "interpretation" of Christianity, but simply to say what in Marxist thought appears to me to be linked with the Christian heritage.

As I see it, Marxism has incorporated three themes.

1) The awareness of the incompletion of man, the dimension of the infinite. The aspiration to knowledge, admirably expressed by Hegel, involves a two-fold contradictory exigency: to penetrate into the real in order to render it entirely transparent to reason, and to constitute a finished whole: the system of total knowledge. Now, Marx precisely brought out the contradiction which existed between the system that implied an end to history and an achievement of total knowledge adequate for this history, and the dialectical method which thrust out into the infinite the movement of thought carried forward by its two-fold exigency. Marx thus "opened" man to this infinite dimension.

The religions (Christianity in particular) have lived this two-fold exigency: the need for and the impossibility of attaining total knowledge; but they have tried to give answers to the problems of the beginning and the end by means of myths dealing with the genesis of things and with eschatology.

The Marxist critique challenges the illusory answers, not the real questions which elicited them. One cannot deal with religion merely as a form of derangement: it is the answers that are deranged, not the questions.

2) What is true for knowledge is also true for action: man acquires an increasing mastery over nature, over society, and over his own future; but although his power grows without ceasing, he is always militant and never triumphant. He can no more achieve the total "blessedness" to which he aspires than he can achieve "total knowledge". Here again, religion claims to bring a metaphysical answer to this historical exigency. "Religion", writes Marx in The Jewish Question, "is the recognition of man by a detour, through a mediator."

---

(1) The expression from Marx's Die Judenfrage (Braunschweig, 1843) is translated here. M. Garaudy used the French "fonds humain".

Just as religions transformed into an answer something which was basically a question, (when they were prompted by a real need) in the realm of knowledge, so also they (and notably Christianity) have transformed an exigency into a presence in the realm of action: from the need for mediation, they have passed on to the presence of a mediator.

Here again, we shall say that the derangement lies in affirming this presence, and not in the exigency which elicited it, and that Marxism must find and take over that which, underneath the myth, was the aspiration that gave birth to it.

3) The promise of the unification of mankind, which forms a whole and gives meanin to the existence and action of man, is perhaps the richest aspect of the Christian heritage.

For Greek humanism, the largest whole for which the individual was called upon to sacrifice himself was the community of citizens, excluding slaves and barbarians. With the coming of Christianity, there appeared for the first time in our history the call to an unlimited community, to a whole encompassing all the other groups. Let us emphasize that this is still only an aspiration, a hope, for whereas early Christianity "mentally" abolished the distinction between slaves and free men, it did nothing to abolish it in actual fact, as did Spartacus, and did not even urge that it be eliminate It was a religion of slaves, and not a revolution of slaves.

Nevertheless, even if it has taken centuries for the fulfilment of this aspiration towards a perfect meeting of minds to begin to take shape, - and most often not thanks to the Church, but against her, in heresies first of all, (as was the case with Thomas Munzer) then in revolutionary struggles and socialist revolutions, - the fact still remains, according to Engels, that the appearance of Christianity "represented an entirely new phase in religious evolution; for Christianity was to become one of the most revolutionary elements in the history of the human mind". (2) Indeed, for the first time, even if the consequences of this principle were not yet drawn, it was proclaimed that one is not a slave "by nature", and that the slave is a man; whereas even the greatest geniuses of Greece, Plato or Aristotle, for example, regarded the slave only as an object, a "speaking tool".

Within this framework lies what Marx called "the human basis of Christianity", which no so-called "Christian" State has ever achieved to any degree whatsoever, but which Communism can bring about in "a secular way",: a classless society, wherein each child, each man has the possibility to make full use of the human richness he has within him, and where the life and liberty of each is not restricted by but dependent upon the life and liberty of others. That presupposes abolishing regarding human beings as merchandise - an attitude which engenders alienation by transforming (as Marx put it) relations between men into relations between things, and creating the economic conditions of class exploitation, national oppression, and wars. This was the sense in which Maxim Gorki was able to say that with Socialism "for the first time of true love of man is organized as a creative force".

The conception of Christian love according to which I do not know myself, and only fulfil myself in and through others, is the highest image that man can have of himself and of the meaning of life; and this is why Marxism would find impoverished to a certain extent if it had no knowledge of Saint Augustine, Saint Jean de la Croix, or Thérèse d'Avila.

---

(2) Engels, On the History of Early Christianity, first published in Die Neue Zeit, Vol. XIII, 1894-1895, pp. 4 - 13; 36 - 43.

But, instead of teaching that the concrete historical conditions for the full blooming of this love of man for woman and of each man for all men must be created by struggling to transform all human relations by which this love is contradicted and mocked, people invoke this love as if it already existed in order to condemn the just violence involved in struggles against a world that is the opposite of love. Thus this great dream of human unity serves as an alibi for the maintenance of institutions which are the worst obstacles to the coming of this unity and this love.

This permits us clearly to bring out the meaning of Marxist atheism.

*

We, as Marxists, are struggling on behalf of man. Our attitude has nothing in common with the atheism of Lautréamont, for example, as we find it in the "Songs of Maldoror": "My poetry will consist solely in attacking by every means this wild beast, man, and the Creator who ought not to have engendered such vermin." This refusal of God stems from a refusal of man. Our attitude is on the contrary fill of positive implications: we are struggling for man, and the logic of this struggle leads us to atheism when the answers given by the religions to the questions posed by man are unworthy of those questions, and when we are offered something sub-human under the pretence that it is supernatural, when we are offered religions of irrationality or resignation, for example.

Marxism does not need to define itself negatively with regard to this religion. Marx, at the time of his "1844 Manuscripts", and much later, Engels, in his 1874 articles, showed how this word "atheism", with its privative connotations, in no way defines the Marxist attitude. Speaking of the avant-garde German workers, Engels wrote, "Atheism has had its day among them; it is outmoded: this purely negative term no longer applies to them, for their opposition to belief in God is no longer theoretical but practical; they have simply finished with God; they live and think in the real world and are therefore materialists." (3)

Do we take this to mean that they are not interested in the questions posed by man about the meaning of his life and his death, about the problem of his origin and his end, about the exigencies of his thinking and of his heart? Not at all.

If man's greatness affirms itself in a demand for answers to questions, then the weakness or the fault lies with those who claim to give a dogmatic answer that is always bound up with a certain framework of knowledge, an answer given as definite, even sacred, whereas it really bears the stigma of the temporary insufficiencies of a certain era.

Atheism's protest has thus a purificatory value. It is a legitimate and necessary protest against those who condemned Galileo or Darwin, and against those in every age who debase the idea of God by trying to find Him in the temporary gaps in our knowledge.

Atheism's protest is legitimate and necessary against all the gross images of the Creation or the Last Judgement, of Hell, of Paradise, or of the miracles, against all the caricatures of the Infinite which are the crime against the spirit *par excellence*.

---

(3) Engels, *Flüchtlings-Literatur*, Artikel II, printed in *Der Volkstaat*, No. 73, 1874.

If we are told that these things are expressed in a language "for simple folk", then we are face to face with the most dangerous form of contempt for man, that which consists in arresting his development at the stage of mythology and primitive magic, instead of calling upon him to seek higher answers.

In order to respond to the lofty human demand for total fulfilment through knowledge and action that will render the Real transparent for us, such a religion offers substitutes (Ersatz) for Totality and for the Infinite, which sterilize and debase both thought and action.

Atheism is legitimate and necessary, if the contribution of Christianity is to be given its full meaning.

I am not posing here the problem of the historical existence of Christ. What is important is that about twenty centuries ago, men conceived an unlimited human community and a form of life which was the first prefiguration of the whole man, through his feeling of personal responsibility for this totality for which he was prepared even to die. This life and this death, perceptible through the limitations of the era which formed an image of them, give us the highest model of freedom and love and of man's perception of an infinite destiny.

However, a literal adherence to the Gospel texts removes that which makes of Christ's life and death an example for men, by stripping him of his human character.

His birth is no longer natural: he ceases to be a model for me because as the son of a Virgin he has been torn away from the human condition.

His life also breaks away from mankind when he is given the attributes of a miracle-working magician, such as one finds in the primitive religions.

Even his death is stolen from us: this splendid death of the man who feels responsible for the destiny of all and who gives his life its meaning and its beauty by sacrificing it on behald of all mankind, - this is not a real death because he is made to rise again.

Thus one of the greatest awakeners of liberty and love was separated from us as an example by being removed from the real history of men and made something other than a man: a myth like other myths, a being born of a God like the heroes of Olympus, performing miracles as did the idols, and rising up (as did Dionysius) with the return of spring.

So that freedom is no longer human liberty, but a divine gift. That love is not of this world: I am taught that it already exists and that Christ has already redeemed us. The history of human struggles for freedom and unity is no longer anything but a trumped-up story, because we are already redeemed.

The myth, like a parasite, conceals what is fundamental.

The basic things are the exigencies of human freedom, love, and unity, which are the soul of the creative activity of man, whose horizon broadens with each stage in his development, from the first flint to the fission of the atom.

Man is only fully man when he strives to be more than he is, when he forges for himself that infinitely enlarged image to which for thousands of years he has given the face of a God. "The hope of man is the flesh of God," said Henri Barbusse.

For a moment, all that men in their most beautiful dreams have attributed to God is not behind us but before us, like a task waiting to be accomplished.

The Anglican bishop, Robinson, wrote in Honest to God that the encounter with the transcendent is not a privileged experience; it is characteristic of all our human experience - in depth. The finite world is self-transcendent. (4)

This daily emergence of that which is transcendent takes place each time something new is added to the human form, in scientific research or in artistic creation, in love when it is capable of reaching the point of self-giving, either through death, or through a social revolution to end exploitation and alienation, or through a national liberation movement to end the oppression and dehumanization of man.

Transcendence is the experience by which man becomes aware that he is a budding god.

This ground can surely be a meeting-place for Marxists determined to understand, integrate, and realize the "human basis" of Christianity, with Christians who understand the purificatory value of Marxism with regard to all disincarnated spiritualisms, and who are determined not to abandon the struggle.

Are this dialogue and this perspective of cooperation and common struggle and striving a utopia?

We do not think so.

We believe that more and more Christians are coming to meet us along this path.

Accordingly as the pressure within the Christian masses becomes increasingly stronger, urging the refusal to interfere in the realm of science; urging men not to regard technological progress as a temptation of Satan, but a legitimate affirmation of the power and grandeur of man; urging that the hierarchy of social classes and social inequality no longer be sanctioned as an institution willed by God in expiation of sin; urging that private ownership of the means of production no longer be considered a guarantee of personal freedom; urging that men no longer cry anathema at Socialism and Communism, but on the contrary recognize them as an organization of human relationships which is superior to Capitalism; urging that the love of life, knowledge, and happiness no longer be considered as evil lusts of the flesh, - as this pressure becomes stronger within the Christian masses, to the point where it can loosen and break the hold of economic and political powers that identify the destiny of the Church with that of their own privileges, a tremendous prospect of cooperation and joint struggle is opened before us.

Then the problem of relations between Christians and Communists will no longer be posed solely in terms of dialogue, but as an opportunity to teach one another and to strive together, to overcome the forces of the past and of death, to work together on the never-finished task of building a "civitas humana".

---

(4) Honest to God, page 52 (SCM paperback edition)

II

A DAWN IS BREAKING WHICH WILL MAKE THE DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE MORE VISIBLE

by

Jean-Yves Jolif, o. p.

The description of atheism sometimes borders so closely upon the Christian faith that it compellingly invites the believer to take stock of his own experience in a more clear-sighted manner. Such is our situation today; and it will become increasingly acute, for certain dimensions of the spirit that were once inseparably linked with faith, are as if liberated: they have become the property of the human mind, which will valorize and make use of them quite independently of their original significance. Christianity is thus discovering, outside itself, a humanism which is like its own inverted image, its secular expression, at one and the same time very close to it and yet completely different and incompatible. Therefore no other attitude is possible except constant return to the original and irreducible meaning of the Christian faith. The present world is a continual demand for "aggiornamento," - which is not a remodelling or adaption of the faith, but a re-adjustment of life to the demands of faith.

In showing how Marxist atheism integrates what Marx called the "human basis" of Christianity, and how it seeks to be its secular expression, Roger Garaudy summons us to effect this return to the essentials. When he refuses to play the part of a theologian or to propose an "interpretation" of Christianity, he thereby grants to the Christian the right to put forward his own interpretation. If we are to begin to understand one another, that is the price: we must be absolutely open with one another and accept one another as we are, with no attempt at deception. It would be useless to meet without first of all agreeing about this need for mutual frankness.

*

What faith discloses to me is the ultimate meaning of human history. Every situation, every action, every decision is really a stand taken with regard to the Life of God that is freely communicated to men in Jesus Christ, and freely received by them.

I learn that Life, in the last analysis, is not somethin I can designate by one of the following human terms: it is neither "biological existence" nor "life of the spirit"; Life, in the absolute sense of the word, is the Life of God which is offered to me. Death, in the ultimate sense, is refusal of this Life. Thus history, in its final reality, is the time and place for the choice between Life and Death.

Still another thing has been revealed to me: that the choice of Life is only possible for me through the grace of Jesus Christ. This is so not only because it is in Him and Him alone that the divine Life has in anyway become immanent in human history, but also because I am basically bound up in Sin, which is refusal of God and therefore Death; and only He can sunder this bond. It is in Him, who in his humanity was fully reconciled to God, that I myself can find reconciliation.

Each time I try to understand the meaning of my existence and that of every man, I am brought back to this essential certainty: "God, rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life in Christ even when we were dead in our sins; it is by his grace you are saved! And in union with Jesus Christ he raised us up and enthroned us with him in the heavenly realms....." (Ephesians 2: 4-6)

This Life which is mine through faith in Jesus Christ is presented to me as Love, fellowship, and unity; for thus it is that God unveils Himself to men: His being is Love, and the most manifest proof of it is that "God..... sent His only Son into the world....." (I John 4: 9) What I am experiencing is the unity of man with God, and the unity of men among themselves. However, this unity in love is not my doing: I receive it; it is freely given, as is the very Life of God. By the same token, this love and unity are not reducible to whatever human terms we might apply to them, - no more than Life and Death can be reduced to whatever these words may mean in their purely human sense. In faith, all these terms take on meaning in the plan of God.

Here indeed, we place ourselves within faith. Faith is our point of departure, and it is in the light of faith that we interpret the history and existence of each man. This means that the categories we have called to mind (Death, Life, Grace, Sin, Love, and Unity) cannot become evident through a secular or simply human, - philosophical, if you will, - reading of history. It is possible, a priori, to read history in this way, with no recourse to faith, and to bring out a certain rationality of history. Faith, - inasmuch as I consciously live it as faith, - will not allow me to cut back the first interpretation to fit the second; for such a confusion would lead straight to dropping the <u>revealed</u> sense of the terms in order to retain only the <u>rational</u> significance they might be given. We would thus have to think of the community of men quickened by God in terms of the historical community: in other words, we would already be presenting an entirely secular version of Christianity.

Garaudy's concern, his constant fear that the movement of history will be arrested by Christianity's dogmatic answers to human exigencies, his repugnance in seeing religions give to man that which can only be acquired by man's own action; his protest against a history which he describes as "trumped-up" because everything has been done in advance; his sense of scandal in the face of a God who only appears to cover up the gaps in human knowledge, - all this seems significant and extremely sound to the Christian. The things against which Garaudy protests are also things we are striving daily to overcome, and that only an incessant conversion can sever from us: a faithless Christianity; a Christianity whose every representation, deprived of the dynamic aim which gives it true meaning, falls by the wayside; a Christianity no longer rooted in the Word of God, and which is no longer the Life of God, but merely a human answer, - and a mystified answer, - to human exigencies; a Christianity which is no longer a call from God, (from a God who reveals His face against all idols) but a man-made fiction no different from pagan religions.

The Christian is alerted to this pitfall: "No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known." (John 1: 18) It is only in faith, - which transcends alss the purely human categories, - that the believer apprehends the Truth by which he lives.

*

Have we not reached the point of situating the Christian life in a sort of other-world which divorces it completely from the life of men? By saying that faith reveals a meaning of history that eludes expression in any purely human category, are we not already accepting exile? In order to achieve that purity which we have been claiming, must not the believer's life remain perfectly invisible within his own soul, thus totally ineffective in this world?

Such seems indeed to be the trend followed by religions. Born of the dissatisfaction, misery, and weakness of a humanity which feels confusedly called to fulfil itself, but which still remains incapable of knowing by what means it can effectively accomplish this, religions are the promise of a fulfilment in another world, in the Beyond after death. Sometimes serving as an illusory consolation and hiding real suffering, and at another time, on the contrary, making it intolerable and urging its elimination, they can never obtain man's final liberation, because they place the answer in a realm which is foreign to the problem.

We should doubtless realise at this point the decisive difference between Christianity and what are referred to in very vague terms as "the religions" or "religion". If we call "religion" what we have outlined roughly, then we are forced to recognize that Christianity has little to do with it. In the first place, Christianity wants to be lived consciously as (a faith) based upon divine initiative, and not as response evoked by and co-existent with human misery. In the second place, - and we must now say this, - it valorizes the present instead of escaping into the other-worldly. Let us make three remarks to illustrate what we mean.

The Kingdom of God is among us. If for the Christian the final meaning of history is this struggle between Life and Death which we have mentioned, the outcome is not in doubt. It is now that I have access to Life, now that I am in God, now that the communion of saints is engendered, and now that I have a chance to experience it. "Eternity" is not so much what is coming after history, as it is a depth of the present. Of course the Kingdom of God is not now fully manifest and visible: I acknowledge its presence through faith only. However, that does not mean that it is absent and only coming "later", beyond history. It does mean that because of its divine dimension, it cannot become visible within the categories of human history to which our present existence is linked. It is not "here" or "there", since all that is "here" or "there" is only human; rather, it is hidden in everything.

To accept living in faith is at the same time to accept human life in the present, and to accept to live in the world. Only this unreserved acceptance will allow for an encounter with the divine richness that is immanent in the present, and for a right approach to this encounter, i. e. through faith. It must be said emphatically: nothing is more dangerous for the Christian faith than disillusionment or contempt for human realities. In detaching ourselves from these realities, we run the risk of projecting ourselves into an illusory "beyond", and becoming absorbed in a world which is wonderful, perhaps, but which has nothing to do with the Kingdom of God, - if it is true that we can only discover that Kingdom through our present condition. On the contrary, there is nothing healthier than the love of life: Christian truth is not "out there", but in depth; it demands that we recognize and go through all the dimensions and levels of this life.

A reflection made by Father Sertillanges is worthy of meditation: I who have lived am angry with those who dare to blaspheme against the strange and wonderful, happy, sad and hopefull life which is given us here. My aspirations are higher; but had only this life and no other been given me, I would not dare say to my Creator, 'It was not worth-while!' The adventure is worth-while, and those who say otherwise are perhaps not worthy to have lived." These words are doubtless not right in line with the "religious" attitude, but they are Christian. They bear witness to a spirit which has probed the meaning of his faith and measured all its implications and demands, before coming to the profound realization that this faith does not expect a man to spit upon life. It is by loving it, on the contrary, that he has kept his faith from crumbling, by setting his sights on the true riches which have been promised him.

Finally, a third remark should be made, and it is perhaps the most important. Unlike the "religions", which regard human life a disgrace to be rejected and escaped from in order to attain the true realities, Christianity regards hum life as a means of access to the divine. Man is God's cipher; in man one sees the handwriting of God. It was in the humanity of Jesus Christ that God manifest Himself to man: this humanity which we all bear within us has been the transparent language in which God has given Himself complete expression and has become accessible to man. The Incarnation condemns any temptation to situate God in that cold and distant transcendence attributed to Him by certain philosophers, which renders Him so foreign to man that man can find no relation to Him without becoming absolutely lost. The Christian God is a God to whom we say "Thou", because He can be the object of love.

This means that what is human is endowed with such richness of meaning that all distinction between the "secular" and the "sacred" is abolished. The human gestures, - and the most human of them all: drinking, eating, loving, repenting, - receive the power to relate man to God. It is again in the human gestures that man expresses his response to the gift of God: "You have my Father's blessing; come, enter, and possess the Kingdom that has "been ready for you since the world was made. For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home..... Then the righteous will reply, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink, a stranger and took you home?.....' And the King will answer, 'I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.' " (Matthew 25: 34-40)

In these human values born within history lies the starting point for announcing the Kingdom of God which can be made perceptible to men of all times. That which is offered us in Jesus Christ, - the Life of God, - is not unrelated to man's quest. To receive this gift is not to scorn or deny any of the true values to which men dedicate themselves and for which they go so far as to give up their lives. It is much more a matter of coming into possession, through grace, of the inestimable values which dwell in the extension of those first values. Nor does the acceptance of this gift mean giving up the pursuit of human effort: for the farther it goes, the richer will be humanity's unfolding, and the more strongly will man's world comprehend the Life of God. Finally, this is not giving oneself an answer that does away with the need for each day's continual search. The Christian can only agree when Roger Garaudy criticizes the absolute knowledge of Hegel; for, if it is true that there is no complete human fulfilment except in the dimension known to faith, we must admit that human history, - that which the Marxist analyses, - cannot complete its cycle, and must be understood as an unending process, open to an horizon which it will never attain.

*

All this leads us to conclude where Roger Garaudy began. If one takes into account the remarks we have just put forward, then it will be possible and even necessary to speak of a "secular fulfilment" of Christianity. This fulfilment is not a liquidation of Christianity, but a necessity which springs from Christianity itself. If it is within the very fabric of his humanity that the believer is transformed by the Life of God and gives his response; if secular history, far from being rejected, is on the contrary promoted to the rôle of a sign and an approximation of the Kingdom, then it is essential for the Christian to build the brotherly community which will be, in history, both the proof of and his actual response to God's call, and also the approximation most likely to bear witness to the communion of saints. Christians do not make up the "brotherhood of the absent": as men among men, they share the same task.

Their way of being present is different, however; because for them the historical task is necessary and yet not decisive. We have just said that it is necessary. It is not decisive because the salvation of humanity, - its Life, in the absolute sense of the term, - does not depend upon our historical or secular success: it is bound up with another decision; with the attitude of men towards Jesus Christ.

Are we not surreptitiously retracting all that we have seemed to admit? Are we not in the end refusing a companionship which we seemed to have promised? All in all, are we not acknowledging the total historical ineffectiveness of "Christian love"? One last thing must be made clear.

Christian salvation is the fruit of a divine initiative and not of human works. In this sense, every man, whatever his historical situation or his actual human insufficiency, can be saved; but not without his co-operation: that means not without his striving, with all his strength, to respond completely to the demands placed upon him by God's call; and not without his aiming, thereafter, at the humanization of history itself. But this historical task, as we well know, involves material conditions without which the most authentic aspirations remain powerless to clear the way and to transform things and institutions.

If it is true that only within the range of our vision can the conditions required for the creation of a brotherly community become a reality, then we can say that "Christian love" has been authentically lived in the past, without its failure to make a visible mark on history giving us the right to judge it incapable of ever making one. On the contrary, everythin leads us to believe that today a dawn is breaking which will make the dimensions of God's love more visible.

III

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND COMMUNIST ATHEISM

by

Helmut Gollwitzer

1. By Communist atheism we understand the elevation of consistent rationalism and immanentism to the dogma of a social-revolutionary movement. This means that the movement adopts a certain system of interpreting the universe and at the same time supports it. This movement admits only one attitude to nature, history and human life: an attitude restricted to elements which are rationally perceptible and which can be rationally explained, recognising only what is perceptible within these limitations, and understanding everything that exists in its secular context. At the same time it maintains that this attitude is absolutely adequate and superior to any other.

2. This attitude is an exact, consistent product, of modern thought which exposes false ideas. Nothing but a far-reaching self-analysis of modern thought can counteract this attitude.

3. Atheism as a dogma has been enlisted in the service of a messianic-revolutionary purpose, which regards the claims of God as an obstacle competing with the claims of man. On the other hand its aim is to fill the meaningless vacuum of an existence without God. Atheism is therefore both the postulate and the historic setting of Communist messianism.

4. Modern atheism is fundamentally different from the atheism of antiquity to which young Marx thought he could return. The whole of modern atheism has grown up on spiritual soil which had already been cultivated by Christianity. Christianity, therefore, shares the responsibility for this atheism, because by removing the element of magic and myth it has opened the door to a rational and scientific concept of the nature of the universe. Christianity shares the guilt because it has failed to give adequate answers to the questions raised by this process, because of wrong desire to dominate spiritual life, and because it has never adequately understood the Message entrusted to it, nor put it into practice. It is true that "the Communists are showing us a finished version of what they learned in our school" (Josef Bernhart) (and this includes its materialism and terrorism!). "The Communists were hated in the first place because they pulled the skeleton out of the cupboard of Western culture" (William Horden, "Christianity, Communism and History", Nashville, 1954). "Communism is both the product of the godless West and at the same time the protest against godlessness" (Nik. Berdyaev).

5. Communism will retain atheism as part of its official dogma as long as it remains messianic. Communism is primarily a social-revolutionary movement, and in the second place an ideological one. If the relationship is reversed the reason is psychological and historical and can always be corrected. The question whether atheism is essential for the existence of Communism must be translated into historical categories (Substantial - accidental), and no longer regarded as an Aristotelian-timeless theory. Messianism is unremittingly opposed to Christianity; the union between messianism and the social-revolutionary programme has historic reasons and can be overcome historically. Moreover, as Mr. Reading rightly says, the atheist thesis is not the logical consequence of dialictic and historic materialism; it is a metaphysical

extrapolation. Materialism itself might also be understood as an open system of explaining the universe "from below". That union is tempered and finally overcome by the sobering effect of carrying out the social revolution, the influence of old and new social factors, and the experience that human nature is constant and that the problems of this development is already today the existence of Marxists and Marxist groups which have no interest in the metaphysical dogma of atheism.

6. Overcoming messianism does not involve disillusionment, replacing utopianism by scepticism; it involves soberly taking people as they are, changing abstract humanism into concrete humanism. Contemporary people will no longer be sacrificed to an arbitrary picture of the future of mankind; the revolutionary energies will become fruitful in giving service to people as they really are, loved by God - service to a "real Utopia" (Walter Dirks).

7. The Christian congregation is one of the social factors which influence Communism. Experience of the un-Christian nature of the Christian congregation has contributed to the growth of Communist messianism. Better experience of the Christian congregation can therefore help to overcome messianism.

8. The Christian Church may therefore hope and pray that the Spirit of its Lord will transform the Communist's fanatical denial of God (of Whom the Church's witness is often so inadequate) into a new perception, which leads from doctrinaire humanism to real humanism. The Church cannot hope to be instrumental in this change unless it is prepared to repent, in response to the accusations made by Communism.

9. The <u>better</u> experiences which must be made with the Christian Church include the following:

a) The Church must give evidence of a deep repentance which not only admits the omissions of former generations, but is even more alarmed about the failures of the Church today.

b) The Church must abandon all false alliances formed in order to oppose Communist atheism. The Western churches expect those in the East to keep the Church's message of peace pure and uncontaminated by Eastern peace-propaganda; but they themselves have had little scruple about allying themselves with other anti-Communist movements which spring from quite different motives, and have thus allowed Christian protest to become a tool in the cold war.

c) The Church must have a new, joyous, determined seriousness about the Christian faith revealing itself in readiness to suffer. This will refute the Communist expectation that anti-religious propaganda and administrative annoyance will prove Christianity to be a mere convention and soon make it "die out".

d) The Church must co-operate in the effort to abolish conditions "in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and contemptible creature" (Karl Marx).

10. The Christian Church must accept Communism's liquidation of the Church's traditional rights as God's requital for its own omissions and distortions of the Christian message, and also as a pioneering expedition into new and strange country. The Church, therefore, must not permit itself any anger or self-pity (which would be comprehensible, humanly speaking); for it cannot regard the external reconciliation between the Gospel and the world, under which it has lived for 1500 years, as a

condition to which it is entitled, on which it can rely, the end of which should give cause for lamenting. It must accept the new situation as a task, and believe that its own Message will have the force to penetrate that new situation, as the Early Church had faith in the force of the Gospel message.

11. The present opposition between West and East is not identical with the opposition between the Gospel and atheism. As the message of the reality of the living God, the Christian message finds it just as difficult to penetrate the West as the East; it is equally strange and close to us and is opposed to any of our attempts to render it innocuous (in the West by all kinds of involvements, in the East by starving it out).

12. In the non-Communist world, especially in the so-called Christian countries, the Christian Church has to a large extent refused to repent. The alliance against the Communist menace tends to turn the Gospel into an ideology, to lead to self-justification, to divide everything Pharisaically into black and white, and to confirm the theory of historical materialism that the Christian religion is a "class-relgion". The Christian churches in the West (whose position is externally easier) can best help the churches in the East by living their own freedom to criticise their own social system with its ideologies and its Pharisaism. It is this freedom that Christians in the East would like to have and to which they have to witness day by day.

13. In the Communist world the Church goes on living (humanly speaking) thanks to the span of tolerance granted by Marx's theory, that religion will soon die out in socialist society. It goes on living despite the struggle which the state considers necessary to wage against it (as a result of Marx's theory about the harmfulness of religion for socialist society). The attitude of the Communist state towards the Church vacillates between tolerance and attack and the Church's position is insecure and constantly menaced. The Church must accept this as an expression of its own fundamental insecurity in the world, as a reminder to seek security in its Lord and nowhere else, and as a challenge to prove its own mettle.

14. The Church must not merely passively accept existing in an environment which is no longer "Christian"; it must accept that position as a commitment from its Lord. Its efforts must not be confined to hoping to outlive Communism; it must make a positive contribution to the society in which it is placed. It is no use hoping to get rid of Communism; that would be an illusion and could only weaken the Church from within. It must influence Communism, so that it develops into something decent for the people living under that régime.

*15. see page 21

16. The Church helps to change the Communist system, and to make it non-totalitarian:

a) by its non-conformist existence, its congregational life, its worship-service and its preaching - by the fact that within the Church the gods of Communist society are not recognised or revered; the church-members live under the mercy and the commandment of the living God;

b) by living in Communist society (both as a Church and as individual Christians) and helping constructively in that society, while at the same time refusing to worship the official gods, thus drawing a clear distinction between the practice of socialism (in which the Church participates) and the messianic

tone of this practice (which it repudiates). In this way the Church helps to weaken the alliance between atheism and socialism. By accepting this limited loyalty from Christians, the Communist state admits willy-nilly the possibility that socialism may break away from atheism.

17. The following facts give cause for hope that socialism may break away from atheism in course of time (cf. Thesis 5):

a) The sobering effect of working to realise the socialist ideal;

b) realisation of the fact that human life can never be free from difficulties and problems;

c) the inner conflict between Marxism's definition of itself as a rational, historic form of thought based on empiricism and its messianic claim to absolutism;

d) the conflict between the goal of liberating humanity and the concentration of power (both spiritual and organisational). Unlike National-Socialism, in Communism this concentration of totalitarian power is not a purpose in itself; it is merely a means to an end imposed by historical necessity.

18. If in course of time Communism ceased to insist on atheism as a dogma, this would make things considerably easier externally for the Church in the communist sphere of influence. But it would probably bring new and different temptations; for instance, it might occur to Communism to do what it has hitherto refused to do and has accused other countries of doing, namely, to exploit Christianity as an ideological façade and offer to form an alliance with the Church. This would be a new edition of similar alliances which have existed in the history of the Church.

19. According to the usual line of though both among Christians and among Marxists, atheism is the direct antithesis of religion in any form. Therefore, this easily leads to the idea of a united front of all the Christian confessions, or all religions and all religious people, against atheist Communism. But in actual fact (as seen in the light of the pure Christian faith) the antithesis is really between legalistic human religions and the Christian Gospel, between any form of religion (theistic or atheistic) of self-redemption and a life which consists in receiving the act of love of the forgiving, living God. In the light of the Christian faith, therefore, atheism cannot be regarded as particularly objectionable, but only as one of the innumerable forms of man's refusal to believe in the living God which He always attacks with His active love. Human "fronts" are legalistic and Pharisaic; the Christian message puts an end to "fronts" and releases individuals from them. So there can never be a genuine Christian front against atheism. But Christians (as witnesses of God's intervention) must go out to the Communists, as they do to all other people, and definitely reject the messianism of self-redemption, while at the same time accepting the atheist as a creature loved and sought by God.

20. Marxism criticises religion, but even more so the Christian Gospel perceives that all religion (including empirical Christianity) is a problematic factor. We therefore need not be afraid to discuss with Marxism the psychological, sociological abd moral problems of religion.

a) We can recognise and accept the Marxist criticism that religious life (in its contemporary form) is conditioned by society, and that it constantly serves other interests.

b) In face of the antiquated, inadequate and shallow Marxist criticism of religion, we can draw attention to the depth of religious life, the variety and depth of the impulses to religious action, and thus also to the vitality of religion and the impossibility of eradicating it, which have constantly thwarted all the Marxist expectations that it would die out.

c) The Christian faith therefore stands up against the Marxist view by showing that religion has a deeper aspect, that the religions are expressions of human experience, needs and problems, and that religious life should be respected. On the other hand the Christian faith agrees with Marxist criticism that inhumane distortions have occurred during the history of religion and of the Church.

21. Contrary to the opinion of the Marxist classics and of many apologists for Christianity, the Christian faith is not bound up for better or worse with religion, nor with idealistic metaphysics. Religion is not a special case of idealism, nor vice-versa. Nor is the Christian faith a special case of both of them.

22. Side by side with the changes in Protestant theology during the last thirty years and with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Marxism draws its own conclusions from the spiritual-social process which W. Dilthey has called "the end of the antique Christian metaphysics". The violence of the Marxist attack forces Christians to clear up and re-formulate their beliefs.

23. This task of clarifying and re-formulating the Christian faith involves especially recognising the weakness of many apologetists, who have attempted to prove the existence of a Creator by having recourse to the law of causality, or point out the limitations of man's perceptive faculties as proof of the necessity of the ideas of God. All this is thoroughly taken into account today by the defenders of Diamat, and its lack of force is clear. Christian thought should no longer struggle around these positions (which were from the outset a misconception of itself). It should realise that its task is not to propound some makeshift hypothesis about the idea of God, but to proclaim the living God of the revelation.

24. For a Christian theology which tends to idealism and individualism, Marxist "materialism" is a strong reminder of the social dimension, and of the fact that human existence is conditioned by history and by nature - as opposed to an isolated consideration of the Ego, idealistic dualism, and over-emphasis on the significance of normative appeals. While "materialist" thought strives to transform society from the bottom upwards (instead of from the top downwards, like the idealists), Christianity recognises the sterility of mere legalism, perceives man to be a vital unity of body and soul, and recognises the goodness and significance of material reality as created by God (cf. the two accounts of the Creation in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2).

25. It is not materialism as such which creates the opposition between Communism and the Christian faith; it is the messianism of Communism which turns materialism into an ideology, a closed system of atheist metaphysics. The Christian faith, therefore, does not accuse Communism for being too materialistic, but for being <u>too idealistic</u>, not for being too rationalistic but for <u>not being rational enough</u>. As a protest against ideologising, the Christian advocates taking man's situation in nature and history really seriously. The Christian advocates freedom for rational thought and the practical testing of secular theories in order to prove if they are true.

26. Freedom of thought and self-critical unbiassed experiment and research are menaced if they are harnessed to the service of religion (religion does not enslave thought; it liberates thought to fulfil its own task). They are menaced also if they enter into competition with religion. The age of the Enlightenment thought it could substitute knowledge for religion, but that expectation was a micconception both of knowledge and of the Christian faith. By correcting that misconception and breaking down the false antithesis between knowledge and faith, the Christian is freer than anyone else to explore the meaning of the universe. But where knowledge is still expected to compete with religion and to take its place, there it is being asked to give something that it cannot possibly give. And if excessive demands are made upon knowledge, then it loses its freedom to give even what it can give. In the transition from methodic to dogmatic materialism, knowledge is made subservient to the claims of an ideology which satisfies man's need for faith, instead of being, as in earlier days, under the tutelage of the Church.

27. Advocating freedom of thought as opposed to dogmatised rationalism, advocating the physical nature of creation as opposed to dogmatised materialism, Christian thought can perceive and bear the limitations set to human reason, and hence to man's understanding and control of the universe: the fragmentariness of all human perceptions, the limited extent to which man can control the world around him, the inevitability of death, the impossibility of Changing many evils, the harm done by progress, man's necessary response to the wickedness of his heart. It is only people who have put their faith in a messianic hope of self-redemption who are afraid of these limitations on human life and who regard them as paralysing. But if these limitations are recognised and accepted through faith in the living God, human activity is not paralysed. Recognition of these limitations will prevent people from being victimised by other men who claim to know what is best for them and isist on planning their destinies for them; and the mysteries of nature and history will be respected.

28. It is of decisive importance to recognise this limitation in an age when the individual, instead of being exploited as in the past, is completely absorbed into society, and his life is rationally organised in the interests of society. Marxist doctrine (at any rate as hitherto interpreted) has regarded man solely in his functional relation to society, and has failed to recognise that everyone exists for his own sake. Communism was therefore unprotected when the tide turned in the struggle for freedom and developed into new forms of slavery and the cynicism of officialdom. Communism is not on its guard against the new forms of estrangement which arises from technical and social progress. In face of this the Christian stands for true freedom and the inviolability of the individual - because every human being exists for his own sake. And everyone exists for his own sake because he is the beloved Child of God. He exists for his own sake just as the beloved is loved for his own sake, and not because of the functions he performs. The Christian faith proclaims God's right to love His creature; it thereby reveals the limitations of the law and the limitations of the claims which society can make on man (and on Nature). In so doing the Christian faith proclaims God as man's protector against man.

29. In face of the compulsory atheism imposed by the Communist party, the Christian Church must bear testimony to the reality of the living God. Its task is not to condemn the atheists. It must not take lightly the fact that so many people reject the Christian faith. Nor must it overlook the fact that, as Simone Weil once said, "There are two kinds of atheism, one of which is a purification of the concept of God".

30. To whatever depths the rejection of the Christian faith may go - even when it is the ultimate refusal and not explicable from any particular motive - the Christian faith must meet that refusal by trusting in Him who can transform stony hearts into hearts of flesh, who can drive out demons, heal those possessed of devils, and raise the dead. In the light of this, the icy coldness of Marxist atheism is not the final authority for the Christian. He takes his stand on the Cross, in readiness to admit his own culpability, and in the light of Easter. He is therefore assured that man's decision to reject God is ultimately powerless in face of God's decision for man. The Christian in the world is the witness and messenger of God's decision.

*15. The right contribution of the Church to society is always to humanise it, to maintain and reform justice, and to form spheres of freedom in which the individual can exercise responsibility. In a state based on justice (Rechtsstaat) the Church will feel that it shares the responsibility for maintaining justice and freedom, and for restricting human power. In a totalitarian society the Church will feel that it shares responsibility for acquiring these good things, i. e. for gradually making the state non-totalitarian.

IV

THE STRUGGLES OF THE WORKING CLASS AND THE SEARCH OF A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

The meeting place of Christians and Marxists

by

Mario Miegge

I. The Critique of Marx Against the Bourgeois Concept of Person

Marxism does not present itself as a "philosophy" in the traditional sense of the word. In the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach (1845), Marx notes that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it".

That does not mean that philosophy become an "activism". The meaning of the Eleventh Thesis lies in the new relation which is established between criticism (which is the task of philosophy) and the social reality, thanks to the appearance of a social class which is radically revolutionary: the proletariat. In the Einleitung zur Kritik der hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie (1844), Marx says: "Just as philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its spiritual weapon in philosophy." It is only by becoming a "material force", that is to say by setting the masses moving, that philosophy can "transform the world". But it is only through the winning of a clear class consciousness - through the elaboration of a method of revolutionary struggle which presents itself as "scientific socialism" - that the masses will be able to accomplish their revolutionary rôle.

The concern of Marxism is not the inert materiality of a Nature foreign to man, but the dynamic of social relations as they are constituted in practice, in the productive activity of man. But this dynamic is grasped from the standpoint of the working class, with a view to the construction of a working class power and a new society.

The correct viewpoint, with respect to any problem in Marxism is, therefore, to place each problem in the concrete framework of the working class movement and in the perspective of the building of a socialist society.

When Marxism wanders from this context, it becomes either a dogmatism (which reflects a cleavage between practice, i.e. the level of the working class, and the centres of political power in which the "theory" is elaborated) or an intellectualism (which may be fashionable and give rise to quite attractive "humanist" syntheses, but which reflects a cleavage between the working class movement and the "Marxist" intellectuals, in a situation of reformism).

1. The Critique of the "Rights of Man"

It was in the essay on The Jewish Question (Zur Judenfrage, 1843, published in 1844 in the Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher) that Marx drew attention to the ambiguity of the liberal conception of the "person" as it results from the declarations of the rights of man and of the citizen.

In the Judenfrage, Marx notes:

(a) that the "rights of the citizen" are conceived in terms of the "rights of man", and are subordinated to these; (b) that the "rights of man" are here presented as "natural rights". But this "natural man" is the "private" and "egoistical" man who acts in "civil society": "what is considered to be true and authentic man is not man as citizen but man as bourgeois." It must be noted that Marx does not yet define bourgeois man in terms of his class content. The viewpoint of the Judenfrage is still that of a democratic radicalism: Marx confines himself to drawing attention to the abstract character of the idea of right and of the political conception of Liberalism; (c) Marx recognizes in the Judenfrage, however, that "the practical application of man's right to liberty is man's right to property". If the person is defined by the "natural rights", and if liberty is the fundamental right, the real content of liberty is, all the same, the right to property. "Liberal" values are therefore the values proper to a "bourgeois" world, a world of property owners.

2. The Proletariat as a Negation of the Bourgeois Order

The decisive turning-point in the thought of Karl Marx is going to depend, then, on the discovery of a class, which, by its very function in "bourgeois" society, is excluded from property, and which constitutes therefore the living negation of the system of values proposed by Liberalism: the working class, reduced to the proletariat.

To discover the proletariat meant, however, to discover the world of production, in the forms of the capitalist economy. Thus Marx passes from the "critique of right" to the "critique of the political economy", that is to say from the democratic radicalism of the Hegelian left to scientific socialism.

It is from 1844 onwards that this transition is effected: it will lead Marx to the great synthesis of the Capital (Vol. 1, 1867), by way of the fundamental stages which are documented by the unpublished Parisian Manuscripts of 1844, by the critique of the Hegelian left (German Ideology and Theses on Feuerbach, 1845), by the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), and by the different writings preparatory to the Capital.

(a) The proletariat is the class which, possessing nothing but its labour power, is forced to sell that power in order to subsist. But labour power reduced to merchandise is the pre-requisite of a capitalist industrial economy. Work for wages is the basic pre-requisite of the accumulation and reprodcution of capital, it is therefore the pre-requisite of property become capital.

"How can an amount of commodities, of exchange values, become capital? By maintaining and multiplying itself as an independent social power, that is to say as the power of one part of society, by means of its exchange for direct, living labour power. The existence of a class which possesses nothing but its capacity to labour is the necessary pre-requisite of capital. It is only the domination of accumulated, past, materialized labour over direct, living labour that turns accumulated labour into capital." (Marx, Lohnarbeit und Kapital, 1849, ch. III).

(b) But if work for wages is the pre-requisite for the existence and reproduction of capital, the working class is, then, the product of the capitalist economy. In order to subsist and to develop, capitalism is forced to produce the proletariat: that is the basic contradiction of the bourgeois world, founded on the capitalist economy. The continued existence of that world really depends on the formation and growth of a class which, by its very condition, represents the negation of bourgeois values, rights and morals.

In a society which proclaims the "rights of man and of the citizen", the proletaria represents "the total destruction of man" (Marx, Zur Kritik der hegelschen Rechts-philosophie - Einleitung, 1844). Henceforward it is clear that "by heralding the dissolution of the existing world order the proletariat merely proclaims the secret of its own existence, for it is itself the actual dissolution of that world order" (ibidem).

(c) The Manifesto brings into focus the revolutionary character of this negation of the bourgeois order. In the bourgeois society "capital is independent and personal, while the living individual is dependent and impersonal" (Manifest der kommunistischen Partei, 1848, ch. II). If now the organized proletariat demands the abolition of this de facto state, the bourgeois say that that is a question of "the abolition of personality and liberty". They are right to say so, "for in fact it is a question of abolishing the personality, independence and liberty of the bourgeois!" (ibidem) "In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. That is just what we intend" (ibidem),

3. Capital and the Process of Reification

In the writings of his youth, Marx recognized the abstract character of the "rights of man", and thus of the bourgeois concept of person. In the period from 1844 to 1848 he recognized that this abstract character is a function of the capitalist mode of production, and that the values of the bourgeois "person" are a hoax; that the bourgeois order has to be abolished by the proletarian revolution, given that it is already abolished in the de facto condition of the working class as a proletarian class.

In the works preparatory to the Capital and the Capital, Marx will reconstruct systematically the process of "alienated labour", which is the very process of the production and reproduction of capital. It was in this framework that Marx drew attention to what we call the movement of reification (Verdinglichung, in German).

(a) In the merchant economy, which at its highest point of development is the industrial economy of capitalism, the form of production and exchange attains its full objectivity.

The process of production and exchange appears then as a rational system, which may be described and calculated in mathematical terms. It is the domain of "things" - in the sense which this term acquires in modern science and technology (which are bourgeois science and technology, born in the process of industrial development).

(b) But, just as "money is not a thing, but a social relation" (Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847, I, 3, A), so also "capital is not a thing, but a social relation mediated by things" (Das Kapital, vol. I, 3, sect. VII). This appears all the more clearly, if one considers industrial capital: "The modern factory, which depends on the application of machinery, is a social relation of production" (The Poverty of Philosophy, II, 2).

(c) But then it must be admitted that, in the merchant economy, "the relations between producers ... take the form of a social relation between the products of labour", and "what here takes the form of a relation between things is merely the social relation fixed between men" (Das Kapital I, 1, sect, I, chap. 1, 4). So there has been effected a sort of reversal, by virtue of which the forms of the commodities (the objects of production and of exchange) "reflect to men, as in a mirror, the social features of their own work turned into the objective features of products of

this work, into the natural social properties of these things" (ibidem). At that point the relations between men in production appear no longer as social relations between persons who work but as "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (ibidem). As we have seen previously, capital (accumulated and "dead" labour) becomes personal, while living labour becomes impersonal. Capital becomes independent, while labour becomes dependent. Capital becomes the subject of the economic process, while labour becomes the object: a commodity which is sold and bought, and which, once sold, is purely a force made available, to be organized for the use of capital.

(d) In the fourth section of the first book of the Capital Marx has traced the process of reification (the process of "alienated labour") in the context of the development of capitalist industry and drawn attention to the fact that the socialization and rational organization of production are effected within capital. The social and rational character of production stands thus as an external and foreign power with respect to the workers.

II. The Problems of the Political Organization of the Working Class and the Perspective of a Socialist Ethic

1. Class Consciousness and Political Organization of Class

Marxism is not an automatism. If it is true that, in capitalist society, the working class finds itself objectively in a state of antagonism to capital, that still does not imply immediately the organization of the working class movement as a revolutionary movement.

Nor is class consciousness a permanent datum for the working class: all the more so since bourgeois society offers, to the working class itself, values and ideological models which tend to obliterate and mask the real social relations. It is not only in the consciousness of the bourgeois that one finds the cleft that in bourgeois ideology runs between the "person", defined by his "rights", and labour reduced to a thing available for use; it is also implanted in the consciousness of the proletarian, in so far as the latter submits to, and in a large measure accepts, the values which are suggested to him by the bourgeois world. If capital is to obtain the availability of the labour power, then the working class must be integrated into bourgeois society and its system of values. (1)

For the working class, the conquest of power in the process of production (in the factory) and in society implies, then, above all the acquisition of a revolutionary consciousness, and by that very fact, the formation of a class political organization.

The objective conditions are given, but the subjective condition of the taking of power remains none the less essential.

In the course of its history, the working class has always known how to organize itself in the struggles against capital. But this organization is not always or necessarily a revolutionary organization; it does not always set itself power as its objective; it is even quite normally oriented towards reformism.

---

(1) For these questions we refer you especially to the texts of Georg, Lukacs, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, Berlin 1923; French translation, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1960. See particularly the third essay: Class Consciousness.

Trade unionism, which is the first form of working class organization, is by its nature inclined to integration into the framework of bourgeois society - except during periods of acute crisis in the capitalist system. So trade union organization is still not a political organization setting itself the problem of seizing power.

On the other hand, even where the working class movement passes from the level of the trade union organization to the level of political organization, the formation of working class parties opens up a series of problems with respect to the capture of power: the integration of the working class into the capitalist system passes more and more, in Western Europe, by way of the integration of the social democrat parties into the political game of bourgeois democracy.

2. The Element of Decision in the Revolutionary Movement

Without being able to go deeply into these questions at the present time, we are merely going to note that it is in this framework that there arises, within militant Marxism, the problem of a socialist ethic.

It is obvious that the question of an "ethic" is posed at the very moment when the question of a mediation is posed.

We have said that, if the working class finds itself objectively in a situation of antagonism towards capital, it does not for that reason immediately find itself in the position of a revolutionary organization. In other words, the workers, going beyond their condition of being purely an available and dependent labour power, must become politically conscious workers, the militants of the working class as a revolutionary class.

It is in the transition from the first level to the second, in the mediation between these two moments, that the perspective of a socialist "ethic" is opened up. It opens up because this transition and this mediation are not automatic, or even inevitable: this transition and this mediation imply an initiative and decision. We must, however, emphasise the fact that, if we speak here of "initiative" and "decision" - and so of an affirmation of liberty - there is no question of a return to the models of the liberal ethic or to the bourgeois conception of the person.

At the level of the working class, initiative and decision acquire a radically new character, i.e. the character of collective action. The capitalist process of industrial production has fashioned the working class in the forms of collective and interdependent labour: it has socialized the productive forces for the benefit of capital. But, in this way, capitalism has produced relations between men which are as relations between things: it has reified social practice. So where the reversal of the situation is produced by the initiative of the working class - every time the working class affirms its power within the structures of production: as well in a strike as in workers' councils - the "liberty" which is being affirmed is no longer an abstractly individual liberty. Objectively solidary in its condition as reified labour power, the working class can affirm its liberty and emancipate itself only in solidarity. The pre-requisite of power, for the working class, is always class unity. But this unity, of which the conditions are given, is always a fresh conquest which is made in the struggle: that is the work and the task, always to be renewed, of the revolutionary organization.

But the capacity of the working class to organize itself within the industrial structure, in ever new forms of struggle - which follow the steps of the evolution of the capitalist system -, defines the meaning of liberty as it is conceived by Marxist socialism. This liberty is the reversal of the movement towards reification: the conquest of the power of decision in the factory, at the very heart of the mechanism of production. That labour power, a function of capital, should be transformed into working class power, which contests and finally destroys the power of capital, means the transcendence of the break between "consciousness" and the collective activity of production, between the "person" and the inertia of reified social relations, between "theory" and practice.

3. The Element of Inertia in the Organization and the "Deviations" of the Revolutionary Movement. Discipline and "Moralism" in the Party.

So, from the viewpoint of Marxism, the solution of the antinomies in bourgeois thought and the contradictions in bourgeois morals is found in the coincidence of "theory" and practice, which is realized in the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat and in the affirmation of a working class power, the basis of a socialist society.

This coincidence, however, appears also, ever afresh, as a goal to be realized, a task to be accomplished. It is here that the moment of organization takes its place: and organization always demands the training of militants in the framework of a collective discipline. But the moment of organization poses, in the framework of Marxism, a series of new problems.

In effect it is almost inevitable that a permanent political organization entails a certain gap between a militant élite and the masses. It is this élite which will ensure the continuity of the working class movement in the periods of stagnation in the struggle.

But the problem becomes more grave from the moment when the "avant-garde" tends to be changed into a group of leaders specialized in the work of organization: whether it be leaders of the trade union or leaders of the working class party.

The question of the relation between the masses and the "avant-garde" is posed in a different way, however, in the very different situations of the working class movement in the capitalist and in the socialist countries. In the capitalist countries the gap between the masses and the political and trade union organization of the class depends to a great extent on the pressure which the system exercizes on the working class with a view to integrating it. This integration demands the division of the working class and, consequently, favours the specialization of the political and trade union cells and their distance from the base: it is easier to integrate the trade union or political bureaucracy than to integrate the working class! In the countries which are in the process of building a socialist society, the gap between the masses and the political organization depends to a large extent on the fact that the party becomes, once it has conquered political power, the framework for a new organization of the State and the basic agent of the transformation of the economy and of social relations.

In the one case as in the other, however, a cleavage is brought about between the level of "practice" - where the working class stands - and the level of "theory" and of "political" organization.

And it is on this line of cleavage that the deviations of the political movement of the class are produced.

The element of inertia in the organization gains the upper hand, and authoritarian concretions are formed, which shackle or paralyze class political action, i.e. the formation of an effective working class power. The recent history of the working class movement and of the socialist and communist parties furnishes sufficient documentation of these deviations for it to be unnecessary to illustrate them here. Let us only note that the discussion of these deviations is the order of the day in socialist countries: for here, in fact, authoritarian deviations and bureaucratic deformations are immediately reflected in the working of the economy and affect its development adversely. The development of the economy and of society depends in these countries, therefore, on the capacity for self-criticism in the socialist movement. In the West, on the contrary, the bureaucratic deformations of the working class movement (whether at the trade union or at the political level) work towards the equilibrium of the economy and of society. From a Marxist viewpoint, the stability of capitalism depends on the incapacity for self-criticism in the reformist trade unions and parties.

Let us note, finally, that the gap between the political organization and the masses is also conditioned by the fact that the working class parties have often become engaged in a strategy of alliances with forces which do not belong to the working class: this refers above all to the "alliance" with the rural masses of the economically retarded areas.

This alliance was a fundamental element in Leninist strategy, which determined the success of the Bolshevists in Russia in 1917-20. In Italy, Lenin's instructions and the Bolshevists' experiences were worked out at the theoretical level by Antonio Gramasci, the founder of the Italian Communist Party, who defined in an original way the relations between the workers in the North and the poor peasants in the South. The policy of the Italian working class movement after the end of the war against the Fascists was conditioned to a great extent by this new perspective of struggle and by the involvement of the trade unions and the parties of the Left in the agrarian question in Southern Italy. But this strategy has assumed a radically new character in the countries in which the socialist movement has developed in the framework of, on the one hand, the struggle against imperialism and, on the other, the liquidation of ancient "feudal" structures.

The history of the Chinese Communist Party since 1927 is exemplary in this respect. The writings of Mao Tse Tung - beginning with the Report on the Peasant Movement in Hu-nan (1927) and Why Can the Red Power Exist in China? (1928) - mark the decisive turning point, after which the revolutionary movement established its bases in the rural areas, giving rise to those political experiments which ultimately led the Chinese communists to victory, in 1949.

Henceforward the "peasant revolution", in areas which have undergone imperialist domination, is going to become one of the most important phenomena of our time. The Algerian war and the Cuban revolution are the most recent examples of it. We must note, besides, that both of them developed, at the beginning, outside of the theoretical and political frameworks of Marxist socialism.

It is, however, obvious that, in this new context, certain problems, which we have indicated earlier, are raised more acutely.

Here, in fact, the relation of antagonism towards capitalism has been defined in terms of the economic and social grip (whether direct or indirect) of Western imperialism. And yet the objective conditions which fashioned the working class in the capitalist countries - in the West and also in Russia before 1917 - in the process of production, in the productive unity of the big industrial concerns, have to a great extent been lacking here. So the socialist movement had to be based above all on the revolutionary organization of the peasant masses. The radical difference of degree in the "socialization" of the peasant masses, compared with the working class, had to be overcome through a type of organization in which the "subjective" element becomes prevalent.

This pre-eminence of the "subjective" and voluntary element in the revolutionary organization has been noticed by several observers in China. It is not by chance that the life of the Chinese Communist Party is marked by a profound moralism. This can be traced back, on the one hand, to the great tradition of Chinese culture. But it is also to be explained by the particular situation in which the revolutionary movement in China developed.

"The Chinese Red Army," Professor René Dumont remarks, "fought for more than twenty one years, say almost a generation, in the most difficult conditions: it thus forged and hardened in the struggle its political leaders, its administration, and even a part of its technicians. The lukewarm and the cowards were quickly eliminated; the only ones left, at the head of the country, were the pure and hard nucleus, courageous, honest and austere, which had been able to withstand the terrible ordeals of the "Long March". (2)

The stress on the voluntary element is shown in the importance given to the question of "the style of work within the party" (see, inter alia, among the writings of Mao Tse Tung, Towards a correct style of work in the party, 1942, and Against a stereotyped style in the party, 1942); in the insistence on the collective practice of "criticism and self-criticism" in the party; in the immense work of rational persuasion of the masses performed at every stage of the building of the socialist society in China. It is, in another respect, undeniable that there easily comes to be an association, once the party has become the framework for the state, between certain dogmatic deviations, "rectifications campaigns", and an element of terror. As the heirs of Calvin and Cromwell, of Robespierre and Saint-Just, we must acknowledge that there has frequently been a connection between moral rigour and terror in the history which is dear to us. Marxism has considered these contradictions, however, as the signs of crisis in a history dominated by the process of alienation, and it has undertaken to resolve them. If now analogous contradictions continue to show themselves in the history of the working class movement and of socialism, Marxism is still in a position to interpret and criticize them. From the Marxist viewpoint, these contradictions indicate a gap between the "objective" and the "subjective" moments, between practice and political organization. They indicate that the working class power is still far from being established that the building of socialism is a long and difficult job, that history does not progress in a straight line or bear within itself the necessity of a "final solution". Marxism remains valid on condition that it recognizes its own problematic character. As far as the Chinese communists are concerned, we must do justice to their constant concern to give value to the rational and moral element in

(2) René Dumont, L'Afrique noire est mal partie. Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1962, p. 230

the relations between the revolutionary leadership and the masses (primarily peasant masses). If the authoritarian and dogmatic tendencies (and the terror which is their consequence) were to prevail, one must say that that would be in the end contradictory to the principles, the revolutionary method and the type or political involvement which have transformed China, leading it from feudal anarchy and imperialist exploitation to the regaining of national independence and the construction of a socialist society.

4. About the "Human Training" of the Militants, and About the Future Orientation

We have insisted, in our account, on the critical and revolutionary elements of Marxism. We must, lastly, draw attention to the fact that the struggles of the working class movement and political engagement in the class party imply an element of personal training, which brings us back on to a (so to speak) more accessible moral ground.

In 1952, Giuseppe di Vittorio, the remarkable leader of the trade union movement in Southern Italy who died in 1957, spoke of the stages of his training:

"As a political and trade union personality, I was born, I grew up, I developed with the working class movement. An almost illiterate boy as I was, an agricultural worker living in a milieu in which illiteracy was prevalent: who could possibly have come to the light without the organized working class movement? Of course, I had a natural inclination for study; but the stronger stimulus to study, to research, sprang from the daily demands and needs of our movement, of our first youth groups, our first trade unions. We needed to understand, because we needed to clear a path for ourselves - and we had to do it by our own means, by dint of will power - in order to escape from the condition of degradation and humiliation in which we found ourselves as workers, in order to win for ourselves a better future. Our movement needed leaders, and it knew how to create them: I am one of them. I would be nothing, I would never have emerged from the anonymous mass of my brothers, the agricultural workers of the South, without the rise and the struggles of the organized working class movement."

The highest documents of this human development of the militants of the working class are to be found among the letters of those condemned to death as members of the Resistance. It is striking to see how men so different in nationality, language and culture could express the same attitude in face of death: the sense of an unconditional engagement, which does not, however, isolate the man but remains still a relation with the others: the sense of a task accomplished with a view to a future which concerns the whole of humanity.

Let us look at a few texts. The men in question are three communist workmen: an Austrian, an Italian, a Chinese.

Rudolf Hlobil. Born in Vienna, 1908. Mechanic. Beheaded by the Nazis at Vienna, 18 November, 1942. Letter to his wife:

"I shall leave this life calmly and with my head high, because I know I have done nothing wrong. I am not ashamed of what I have done: it was my duty as a man to help the others. And I hope that you will not be ashamed to have had a husband who also had something to give to others and who acted openly according to his convictions. I regret only that you had to bear so much trouble for my sake. Do not grieve: it has not been in vain."

Eusebio Giambone. Born 1903. Mechanic. Driving force behind the struggle against the Fascists at Turin, 5 April, 1944. Letter to his wife:

"... I am not a believer, I do not believe in a world beyond; I am sorry to have to die, but I'm not afraid of dying; I'm afraid of dying - does that make me a hero? No, not at all; I have peace and calm for quite a simple reason, which you know; I am peaceful because I have a clear conscience. That is rather banal, because even those who have merely done no wrong have a clear conscience, but I have not only done no wrong, but during the whole of my short life I know I have done good, not only in a limited way by helping my neighbour, but by giving myself completely, with all my powers (however modest), in fighting without respite for the great and holy Cause of Oppressed Humanity."

Wong Sha-Hu. Worker, Secretary of the Electricians' Union in Shanghai. Condemned to death and shot by the Guo-min-dang in April, 1948. Letter to his friends:

"Dear and courageous comrades, I wish you good health, and that you may continue to fight bravely, for the future light. This light is coming to meet you, you only have to stretch out your hand to it: do not give up."

*

For more than two years, I have been living 100 Km. to the east of Rome, in a little town in Central Italy, which shares, though quite marginally, in the present economic boom of the European Common Market. In this traditionally Christian region, in which the bitter life-struggle of "primitive economic man" is beginning to be covered over with the comfortable values of neo-capitalist society, I have found among the socialist and communist militants something more than friends: I have found in them the only people, in this milieu, to organize their life in the perspective of a collective future, in the perspective of an active and responsible transformation of the contradictory society which surrounds them: the only men, in the last resort, to live here in hope.

It would be a very unwise course, and somewhat dishonest, to try to draw, whether from the foregoing texts or from a very limited personal experience, any comforting conclusions on the affinities between the attitude of Marxist militants and the attitude of committed Christians. In the present time, Christians must be put on their guard against the temptation to make too facile an apologetic. A meeting between committed Christians - who have acknowledged the end of "Christendom" and know its ambiguities - and the militant Marxists is certainly possible. This meeting cannot take place, however, in the abstract forms of a "dialogue between different ideologies". It can only take place on the ground on which Marxism stands: that of the struggles of the working class and of the search for a new social order. But one cannot stand on this ground without making a choice, which represents a radical break with the past of the "Christian Society": a past which still weighs heavily on the present of our Churches.

V

SOME ASPECTS OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MARXISTS (1964-65)

by

Mauricio Lopez

The last two years have been particularly fruitful as far as encounters between Christians and Marxists are concerned. Initiatives have multiplied on wither side, and are creating a climate which is becoming more and more propitious for better mutual understanding and possible cooperation on the level of concrete action. There is an evident change of psychological attitude, finding expression in an atmosphere of increased openness and receptiveness. Of course, we have just touched the beginnings, and there is a long way ahead; just now we are concerned with initiatives on the part of individuals and small groups, having to overcome the dead-weight of inertia and mistrust which still exists on the official level.

Our aim is modest in object and outreach: to stress the most significant developments of recent years, limiting ourselves in this to the continent of Europe. Even so, we are quite certain that we are not doing justice to all the events in the realm of ideas and on the level of dialogue, occurring within this space of time. It is not without a certain arbitrariness in the sequence of ideas, that we found we have to turn to the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Marxist initiatives. This does not signify exclusion of the Orthodox churches; their particular situation in this case leads us to include them purely in an illustrative capacity.

The Dialogue from a Protestant Point of View

1. Two Protestant theologians have put forward some significant thoughts on a real encounter with the Marxists; they are J. L. Hromadka, of Czechoslovakia, and André Dumas, of France. Focus and content differ as far as detail is concerned, but in essence they agree. It must be realised, above all, that the dialogue makes certain demands on both parties. The Church in studying profoundly its own history and motivation would discover the necessity for a triple liberation. In the first place it must be freed from the drag of the bourgeois spirit; it was this almost incrustation with liberal society which fettered the Church in a static and limited situation, foreign to reality, and alienated from life. It was incapable of filling the spiritual vacuum of post-war Europe; other ideologies of the world - existentialism and Marxism - satisfied the spiritual hunger of the people; Marxism is an effective spur in moving the working masses. The divorce between the religious world and the working world took on alarming characteristics; the re-encounter has yet to be realised. In the second place, the Church must free herself of the drag of the colonial spirit. Missionary enterprise followed the same route as colonial enterprise. Naturally, aims were different, as is clearly shown by the values of human dignity and freedom which the Gospel perpetrated in colonised regions. Less happy was the result of missionary influence in other regions, above all because of their pre-occupation with stressing the Western values, rather than acting as leaven to an authentic national culture. The situation was worsened by the political legacy imposed by the origin shared by the missionaries and the dominating power, and a certain paternalistic attitude which turned the enterprise into a reactionary force. The efforts of the churches and the missionary movements to extricate themselves from this situation are evident; in as far as they were successful, the dialogue with the

Marxists stands to benefit a great deal. Suffice it to say that the presence of the Tiers-Monde, becoming all the time more and more vigorous and dramatic, is a challenge to cut off all the connections which the Church still maintains with an imperialistic past. Finally, the Christians must free themselves of the crusade spirit. This does not mean mere passivity in the face of the adversary. The confessing Church was able to fight against national socialism. Will it have to do the same against atheistic Communism? The answer is no, and for various reasons. Today's opponent is a different one: his aim is not racial supremacy, but a more just and fraternal society, although the instruments used for this purpose may not always be the most adequate or the most just.

2. The dialogue also calls for a clear view of the world of today and a heart sensitive to its needs. That is, a proper grasp of the phenomenon of secularisation, of the awakening of peoples and races upon whom an independent way of life is dawning, and a profound understanding of the socialist revolution. Hromadka points out that all conversations with the Marxist must have as their background their deeply human concern for the creation of an order in which the individual would be released from his economic, social, and political alienation. The atheism of the Marxist has a positive slant: in his eyes religion is an instrument of the exploiting classes, a left-over from the mythical, superstitious conscience of humanity; atheism is the struggle to free Man from his servitude - a basis for the total liberation of Man.

The dialogue demands a new point of departure. Until now the tendency was for a confrontation on the level of Marxist ideology and theological dogmatism, each of these being walled in their own positions, like strong holds without a crack or window. But just a position of ideas is not dialogue; dialogue happens between persons. This is a new departure which obliges each party to delve deep into their faith or conviction; it means going to the very foundations of their beliefs, ideas, and ways of life. At this point the Christian comes face to face with the freedom and the power of the Gospel and the Marxist with the initial humanistic impulse. This makes it impossible for the debate to be entered with prefabricated plans and ready-made answers, sweeping aside the charicatural images which the one has of the other. It has been said that we are given to the Marxist, just as the Marxist is given to us. We are both confronted with a truth which is not ours to possess and which transcends us. Thus one comes to recognise in Marxism the emergence of a more humanistic perspective - that Man is more than merely the complement of an economic system; the Marxist, in their turn, are taking note of the renewal of faith in the ecumenical movement, and are beginning to grasp the religious phenomenon in a wider sense, distinguishing its inspiration from its crystalisation is history.

3. It could be said that the dialogue is concentrated for the most part on the theme of Man, his essence, and his destiny. Is the life of Man totally accounted for in history? Does the horizon of Man demand tracendency - or does it not? What is the meaning of liberty? What is the significance of service from man to man? Hromadka says that Marxist humanism expresses in secular form the ethical and social tenets of biblical and reformed Christianity. Another question which preoccupies us it that of the relationship between theory and practice. It seems that there is a parallelism between the two aspects, since both stress the ethical, practical out-pouring of knowledge; both, more than mere theories, are ways of life, patterns of existence, ways of entering into relationship with the world. There is, however, obviously a deep disagreement. For the Christian, the grace of God moves the will of Man; it is a power which throws its beams on history, without depriving Man of his responsibility. For the Marxist grace divests Man of his responsibility, and it is the anticipation of a human luminosity not yet realised. Nevertheless, whether giving to human enter-

LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney, GENEVA

prise a relative or an absolute significance, both attitudes are called today to a common responsibility - for the moulding of a more viable world and a more fraternal humanity; this means common action in the interest of the abolition of hunger and injustice, and an effort to fill in the ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor nations.

4. Steps are being taken on the part of the Christians towards the preparation of suitable grounds for the dialogue. Thus in Eastern Germany the Student Circle of Weissensee has engaged in a serious theological study on the relationship between the Church and the World. Some of the theses produced are emphatic on the point that all men live beneath the sign of that reconciliation which was achieved by God in Jesus Christ, and that the expectation of His coming is an invitation to all Christians to take an active part in every effort to tend the wounds of Man, and to better the conditions of his existence. The Christians of Eastern Germany have to overcome their anti-Communism, which is both comforting and paralysing, and to enter into creative dialogue with the new reality in which they live. This is the conception of their presence in their surrounding society held by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Gossner Mission. The CDU declares itself to be a party with Christian views, which does not, however, pretend to impose Christianity through politics. Its leaders claim that no Christian social order can be derived from the Scriptures; that the solution to economic and social problems requires technical competence, and in this Marxism can make a positive contribution - although this does not mean that it should be accepted "in toto". Its mission is to achieve a political pro-existence - a real practice of diakonia in public life, without any pretension to power. It seeks a political orientation, but does not pretend to put itself in the place of the Church - a source where the followers of the Christian Faith gain their strength from the Gospel, which gives them renewed vigour for action. The Gossner Mission was started some ten years ago, and followed the opposite course from that of the CDU, in that while the latter cut itself off from the realm of political experience in order to attain a spiritual depth, the Gossner Mission took theological reflection as its point of departure, from which it set out to serve Man and society. In its preoccupation with the renewal of Church structures, it has become increasingly convinced, during recent years, that this task requires contact with the social context, above all, which is the frame encasing the life of men, and the politics of men. To be present on that level is to be present at the point where the most important and vital decisions are made.

The Conference of Hungarian Lutheran pastors, which met in Budapest in April 1964 stressed the idea of the Church being a Church within the context of socialism, given over to the service of the people. Marxist socialism suggests a re-reading of Romans XIII, placing the accent rather than on the obedience of ruled to ruler, on the responsibility which all have in common to organise the life of the nation. In Russia there is a twofold movement which could have important consequences for the dialogue: in the first place an attempt on the part of the intelligencia - totally divorced from the Christian Church - to inquire into the cultural roots of the Russian society - a process which could lead to a re-encounter with Christianity, which was leaven to the forming of the nation. The second side of this movement is the growing interest aroused by the work of Theilard de Chardin - called by some a "Christian Marxist" - which makes the humanistic significance of Marxism more approachable by Christians, and the fundamental elements of Christianity more discernible by the Marxists.

The Dialogue from a Catholic Point of View

1. Although the confrontation between Roman Catholics and Marxists began some time ago, they have in general been variously affected by the changing degree of rapprochement between Rome and Moscow. It is well known that when the Russian Revolution carried through, Pope Pius XI made diplomatic attempts to get into contact with the Soviet Government. Cardinal Gaspari said at the conference in Genoa in 1922, that "the Church had no objection in principle to the formation of a Communist state". However, this promising start was not followed up; the relations degenerated, and a total impasse was reached when the proclamation of the Encyclical Divini Redemptoris, a total condemnation of Communism, was drawn up. The death of Stalin, and later that of Pius XII opened up a new era in which a certain "thaw" is predominant, due to the openness of Moscow towards Rome, the personality of Pope John XXIII, the ecumenical movement, and the Vatican Council. It seems that a decisive moment in the relations between the Vatican and the Kremlin has come, as shown by the refusal of the Vatican Council to condemn Communism and atheism, and the proclamation of the schemas on religious liberty and the Church and the World, widening the vision of the Roman Catholic Church on the problems of Man and contemporary society.

2. Two papal documents - Pacem in Terris of Pope John XXIII, and Ecclesiam Suam by Pope Paul VI - have greatly encouraged the encounter between Catholics and Marxists. The former does not explicitly mention the dialogue, but does presuppose it. The famous distinction between the "erroneous philosophical doctrines" and the "historical movements" stemming from them was established in a "true spiritual key" for Catholics.

A doctrine, once formulated, does not change, whereas the economic, social, and political movement to which it has given birth can be greatly influenced by historical circumstances. Thus these Catholic movements which have social, political, and economic aims can come into contact with those non-Christian movements on the level of practical action.

Ecclesiam Suam acknowledges the possibility of the dialogue, but at the same time underlines its difficulties. Paul VI reaffirmed the condemnation of atheism not so much as a judge pronouncing sentence but rather as a spokesman for the victims of its ideas and actions. However, according to the encyclical for lovers of truth dialogue is always possible. "The lack of sufficient freedom of expression and action" and "the dialectical misuse of words" for utilitarian ends rather to express truth are serious obstacles to the encounter. Paul VI calls for reflection on the Marxist's view of the world in order to detect the causes of his atheism. This reflection will reveal the existence of common values which may serve as the basis for a fruitful dialogue. The encyclical points out, among other things: the compelling desire for greater justice, a readiness for sacrifice, a human solidarity and compassion which is akin to the Gospel, the conviction that the relations between political communities should be one of peaceful and competitive co-existence. The creation of the Vatican Secretariat for non-Believers expected to stimulate this line of thought.

3. The change of climate and attitude has encouraged Catholics to take initiatives to open the dialogue, with the tacit consent of the hierarchy. Thus, for the first time since its inception, Marxists were to participate in the Week of Catholic Intellectuals, held in Paris in April 1965, and to discuss Marxism and religion. They spoke about the use of religion by certain ruling classes, and the conditioning of religious belief and practice by social structures; but they noted at the same time, that Christianity has been a stronghold against the established order, as at its beginning. A Roman Catholic pointed out that the religious phenomenon is universal in

time and space, that it has an extraordinary capacity for survival, and that the changes which it undergoes in the course of history are peripheral rather than essential. In brief, the religious phenomenon cannot be explained by a complex of social circumstances, but has its explanation inherent within it. At that meeting, Gilbert Mury pointed out that clericalism wipes out any possibility of progress for man, but that John XXIII, "the Pope of Everyman", the Church has broken with its feudal past and recognized the greatness of human undertakings. He added that Christians and Marxists should take part together in the building of the world - Marxists to achieve the fullness of humanity, and Christians to continue God's creation.

4. Another important step has been the meeting organised by the St. Paul Society in Salzburg in April 1965 with the blessing of Cardinal Koenig. It was evident there that the encounter with the Marxists has today an ecumenical significance and is an intrinsic part of the universal process of secularization. Marxism makes an invaluable contribution to the formation of a secular culture and way of life. Marxism has been the first to conceive of the humanization of the world, of a world of men for all men. A Christian should be open to Marxist values; "he who is thus open, who does not believe he has a monopoly of truth, cannot be accused of cowardice or of seeking an easy compromise", said Karl Rahner. Moreover, as Salzburg showed clearly, the question of the future of humanity is before us. Faced with the danger of cosmic suicide, Christians and Marxists together should seek to assure a better destiny for the human race. "The wall" which divides men physically from one another, and about which we hear so much, existed already in our minds, and we must create those psychological conditions which may lead to a reconciliation of mankind.

In Salzburg the difficulties of coming into contact with Marxists were frankly faced again. One almost insurmountable obstacle is their atheism. Is atheism essential to the ideological content of Marxism, or is it an historical adjunct porduced by particular circumstances? An even more serious obstacle is the fact that a Communist would not consider Christian praxis on the same level as his own. He needs a more lucid and profound understanding of the religious event; Salzburg talked again about the distinction between faith, the authentic core of religion, and Christian ideology, which is always shaped by historical circumstances.

Both Catholics and Marxists recognize that the starting point of the dialogue should be the question of Man. Both insist on the "prospective" character of human existence; both assert "the transcendency", but attribute to it different meanings. For a Christian "transcendency" gives meaning to history, whereas for the Marxist the reverse is true; while for a Christian trenscendency takes the form of an answer, for the Marxist it takes the form of a question.

5. A Catholic initiative whose repercussions have been widely felt in Italy has been the publication of the book, DIALOGO ALLA PROVA. It gives an account of a characteristic phenomenon of our era - the fundamental importance of the religious theme for political culture. In Italy the Marxist theorists are beginning to say that the ability of Marxism to reverse the process of human alienation is limited to man's external conditions, and are acknowledging that religion is distorted if it is seen as pure alienation and thus something to be totally eradicated from human life. The Roman Catholic Church in Italy has entered the ecumenical era, in a process of transformation of its "evangelical presence" in the world, and Catholics are becoming accustomed to see human values in the Marxists. In a very interesting passage of this book, Lombardo Radice, a Communist philosopher, says that "the task of Italian Marxists is not to propose an ideological compromise, or offer formal guarantees, but to carry

forward its revolutionary strategy in such a way that it becomes clear to everyone that religious freedom, and the more general freedom of opinion, are "connaturel" to the revolutionary road which we are travelling.

Vatican Council II, in spite of the efforts of a minority, refused to condemn Communism when it considered Schema 13 on the Church and the World. However, Schema 13 does not break entirely the continuity with previous positions in that it repeats with firmness and sorrow the earlier reproofs of atheist doctrines. However, some interventions, like those of Cardinal Seper and Bishop Elchinger, underlined that Christians, and even the Church, have been the cause of atheism when they have opposed the progress of the world and the will of God that justice shall be done on earth.

Signs of Hope on a Long and Difficult Journey

1. So far we have talked of initiatives taken by Christians, but it is also worthwile to take a look at evidences of Marxist openness to dialogue. These can be seen even in the socialist countries of Europe. At the inauguration of the Chair of Scientific Atheism at the University in East Berlin, Professor Klohr stated that the purpose of atheist propaganda is to stir up the masses rather than to convert them to atheism. This could be interpreted as a change in the means to achieve the same end, but the new and startling element is that Christians are taken seriously and are invited to join in the struggle for peace and socialism. We do not find here much reference to the inevitable disappearance of Christianity.

The orthodox spokesmen for Communism in the West have taken a position against the Ilyichev report which demands the intensification of the anti-religious compaign in the USSR. For them, all administrative pressure is a sign of the ideological weakness of Marxism. They underline that there is a possibility for the objective survival of Christianity though for reasons that a Christian would not consider valid. In any case, religion will be eradicated without fanfare when an empirical vision of the world gives way to a scientific one.

2. Roger Garaudy, a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, is the spokesman of a nucleus of intellectual Marxists who are speaking about a noticeable - and notable - change in relations with Christians. Previously Marxists and Christians moved "parallel to one another", now Marxists recognize what Christianity contributes to their own vision of the world and at the same time Christians are becoming aware of the human values contained in materialism. Garaudy, commenting on Marx's description of religion as "the opium of the people", says that this is part of the pre-history of Marxist thought, and is an inadequate appreciation of the religious event. The same Marx developed a dialectical conception of religion according to which it can assume different roles in different historical situations. Faith becomes truly dyramic when it grips the masses, and the Marxist should rejoice that the Christian conscience has such power to redeem man from alienation. Protestants are invited to return to the Calvinism of the reformed faith in order to release Christianity from bourgeois structures in which it is entangled, and turn it towards the future - a future which Christians and Marxists should build together.

2. In his book, DE L'ANATHEME AU DIALOGUE, Garaudy takes up again the thesis of Gilbert Mury according to which in the history of Christianity two poles can be discerned: the apocalyptic pole which is the protest towards God of the faithful, against the injustice and miseries of the world, and a Constantinian pole which is the congealing of faith in religious institutions, intellectual formulations and

moral codes. It is the former pole which makes Christianity a genuinely human religion of an undeniable historical validity. It is on the double level of history and inspiration that the dialogue has its full meaning; it is in the stream of history that man perceives the disparity between what he is and what he ought to be. The fact that the Christians proclaim a "presence" and the Communists the absence of it is not a barrier to thinking and working together. According to Garaudy both Christians and Marxists are possessed by the same passion - Man - and by the same conviction - that history cannot be fulfilled without both of them.

It seems then that Marxists today see Christianity in a new light, that is, as a methodology of human enterprise. But, as Dumas says, grace is still a very serious obstacle in the debate. The Marxist sees grace as only a lack of historical maturity on the part of the Christian, while for the Christian it is the gift of God in Jesus Christ, a real forgiveness, and a liberation from the temptation to self-justification.

3. The selective character of this review should not lead us to attribute to this dialogue an extent which it has not yet attained. All those who reflect on their participation in it - Hromadka, Dumas, Dubarle, Jolif, Gollwitzer, Cottier, etc. - agree that they have scarcely begun and that the way is long and difficult. They must overcome the emnity, mistrust, ideological rigidity, and sectarian dogmatism of the past. The questions of what should be debated and the purpose of the discussions are constantly raised. This sudden mutual recognition is accompanied by a feeling among Christians that it may distract from their mission and service to the world. One thing is clear: the ecumenical movement cannot be conceived of today without this new dimension of the dialogue which it is pursuing with contemporary man and society.

Bibliography

G. Gottier and others, Dialogue avec les Marxistes, in Pax Romana Journal, 1965-1, Fribourg, Switzerland

C. Cuenot, Theilard y el marxismo, in Cuadernos para el Dialogo, Madrid, junio 1964

Y. Chabas, Christians and Marxists, in The Christian Century, Oct. 20, 1965, Chicago, USA

D. Dubarle, "Pour un dialogue avec le marxisme", Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1964

A. Dumas, "Christian meets Marxist", in Frontier, Spring 1965-1, Vol. 8, London

C. Eggers Lan, "Cristianismo, marxismo y revolucion social", J. Alvarez editor, Buenos Aires, 1964

R. Garaudy, "De l'anathème au dialogue", Plon, Paris, 1965

Mario Gozzini and others, "Il dialogo alla prova", Vallecchi editore, Firenze, 1965

J. L. Hromadka, "On the threshold of a dialogue", in Communio Viatorum, Vol. III, No. 2, 1964, Prague, Czechoslovakia, See also Study Encounter, Vol. I, No. 3, World Council of Churches, Geneva, "Prejudice and Dialogue".

J. L. Hromadka, "Gospel for Atheist", with an Introduction by Albert van den Heuvel, in Risk, World Council of Churches, Vol. I, No. 1, Spring 1965

Informations Catholiques Internationales, "Dialogue avec les Marxistes", No. 240, 1965

J. Y. Jolif and others, "L'homme chrétien et l'homme marxiste", La Palatine, Paris, 1964

A. Molnar and others, "Les protestantes tchèques et l'edification du socialisme", in Christianisme Social, No. 5-6, Paris, 1965

M. Mourin, "Le Vatican et l'URSS", Payot, Paris, 1965

G. Mury, "Christianisme primitive et monde moderne","Centre d'Etude et Recherches Marxistes", Paris, 1965

C. Ordnung and others, "Chrétiens et marxistes en R. D. A.", in Christianisme Social, No. 7-8, Paris, 1965

E. Rideau, "Dialogue avec le marxisme", in Etudes, Paris, janvier 1965

G. Widmer, "L'Evangile et l'athée", Labor et Fides, Geneva, 1965